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# Scrapbooking men's intrusions: 'It's nice to have a place where you can rant about things that people normally tell you you're over-reacting about'

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents an in-depth study of eight women's experiences and conceptions of men's intrusions in the UK. 'Men's intrusions' is posited here as a useful concept for exploring a lived continuum of men's practices in and across digital, online and offline space. Typically, research on men's intrusions has focused on specific and bounded space, neglecting the interrelation and collapse of sites and spaces into each other. This paper addresses this omission and finds that participants experienced a wide range of complex, multi-faceted intrusions, all unique, but sharing the common characteristics of being simultaneously unexpected and continuous, and of imposing gendered-self-awareness with lasting negative effect. In the process of making sense of their experiences, participants adopted different frames for conceptualising men's intrusions, three of which were identified: an individual frame, a grey frame and feminist frame/s. This sense-making process was largely facilitated by the activity of scrapbooking; the research used analogue and digital scrapbooking methodologically to represent diverse intrusions occurring across diverse mediums. The findings have implications for both developing and complicating understandings of the continuum of men's violence against women and also for diversifying feminist research approaches to gender, space and violence.

## Introduction

Following a history of specific naming praxis, 'men's intrusions' is posited here as a useful concept for exploring a broad continuum of men's practices in and across digital, online and offline space. The article argues that studying men's intrusions necessitates a nuanced methodological approach, namely digital and analogue scrapbooking, to aid in the identification and representation of intrusions occurring in and across mediums. This argument is put to the test with eight women in a week-long study; detailed findings of the 'where', 'who' and 'how' of intrusions and the frames used by participants to interpret them are presented and discussed.

### A history of violence: naming praxis in the UK and USA

Since the 1970s, the nature and extent of men's violence against women has been increasingly documented by feminist research and activism (Kelly, 2012). Early scholarship addressed and connected a range of women's experiences, from routine interruptions by strangers in the street and daily harassment at work to abuse in the community, care and at home – positing men's violence against women as both too widespread for even 'epidemic' status (Kelly, 1988: 5) and too

'everyday' for easy articulation (Davis, 1994; Stanko, 1985).

First introduced in the UK in 1988, Kelly's conceptualisation of men's violence against women as a 'continuum' attempted to articulate the complexity of connections between commonplace and criminal manifestations. Kelly found that women's experiences of violence, far from constituting discreet and hierarchical categories of offence, shade into and out of one another, taking on particular meanings and harms in particular contexts. She argued that the continuum shares both a common character and a common function, namely, to naturalise and maintain women's subordination.

This conceptualisation has been at the core of much subsequent naming praxis in the Global North (see Brown & Walklate, 2012; Kelly, 2012), albeit perhaps increasingly with a degree of rhetoric flippancy, in quickly (but usefully) identifying men's behaviours as collective attempts at interpersonal and political power. But what about the continuum as experiential rather than solely conceptual? The direction of related research in the UK is inevitably shaped by processes of specialism and by evidence-based paradigms. Nonetheless, the continuum constitutes more than just a conceptual backdrop against which specialist knowledge of specific offences can be developed. After all, its emergence from survivors' own reflections on the inter-connectivity of experience resonates greatly with contemporary social movements like

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#MeToo, #TimesUp and #MeQueer. Here renewed attempts at a language of both commonality and specificity can be witnessed – a call to readdress the ‘connective thread’ between lived experiences of systemic and intersecting inequalities (Vera-Gray & Fileborn, 2018).

Re-visiting the continuum as it is lived and experienced requires a workable conceptual apparatus to open research up to multiple highly specific experiences: ‘a form of naming that helps connect criminal forms ... to the more routine interruptions of women’ (Vera-Gray, 2016a: 15). This conceptual apparatus must be inclusive of a wide range of experiences that women report, some of which may not, in all contexts, feel unwelcome and many of which might seem to them to lie beyond the scope of criminal justice (Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017).

Equally, women might perceive some incidents involving men as being, for example, racially-motivated, ableist or homophobic rather than gendered. As such factors are co-existent or co-constitutive (Crenshaw, 1991), researching intersectionality necessitates a tool which also takes account of such incidents. After all, *how* women define these experiences greatly shapes *what* actions they take. A concept which opens the door to this sense-making process is therefore vital for academics and activists, but also for policy-makers and practitioners.

Revisiting its use in older Anglo-American feminist research, UK-based academic Vera-Gray (2016a: 15) proposes the concept of ‘intrusions’ to ‘refer to the deliberate act of putting oneself into a place or situation where one is uninvited, with disruptive effect’. She argues that highlighting the *actions* of a perpetrator permits a wider range of practices to be addressed and avoids invalidating those without proved ‘malicious intent’.

Similarly, conceptualising intrusions first as ‘uninvited’ rather than ‘unwanted’ or ‘unwelcome’ offers a point of departure for exploring what *form* an incident took and *how it was experienced and defined*. This paper assumes intrusions are inherently uninvited, resisting theories of subtle invitation or miscommunication given evidence that men know when their behaviour is unsolicited (for example, O’Byrne, Rapley, & Hansen, 2006). The focus here then is on men’s actions (not intentions) and on women’s interpretations. The act of being intruded upon can thus be taken as a ‘common character’ of the lived continuum, whilst variations, shadings, interpretations and connections between events can also be addressed.

Moreover, the term ‘intrusions’ usefully highlights the significance of experiential boundaries. Stanko (1985: 9) observes that intrusion denotes ‘the invasion of self, the intrusion of inner space, a violation of ... autonomy’, while Vera-Gray (2016a: 15) argues that the term captures an ‘experience where one’s inner world is entered into, rather than solely acted on ... coming closer to the experience as it is lived; intrusion not only onto but, crucially, into women’s experience of their bodily-self’. Certainly, this notion of invaded inner space and experience reflects what women report across a range of abuses (see, for example, West, 2003; Herman, 1997).

### Men’s intrusions: taking the concept forwards

The term men’s intrusions has so far been explicitly operationalised by Vera-Gray (2016a, 2016b) through a more specific focus on ‘men’s stranger intrusions’. Her work explores fifty women’s experiences of unknown men in public spaces – notably major UK cities – and articulates the ‘phenomenological texture’ of a range of intrusions, including staring, verbal interruptions and flashing (2016b: 6). This innovative addition to the literature on violence against women reveals how such experiences ‘create particular habitual dispositions for women’ who anticipate and respond to them on a pre-reflective level (2016b: 64). Her participants live the continuum through a *fear of escalation* from one event to another, trying to adopt the ‘right amount of panic’ for each occasion (Vera-Gray, 2018).

Recent research highlights the role of technology in compounding and escalating dating and domestic abuses (Gillett, 2018; Reed, Tolman, & Monique Ward, 2016; Woodlock, 2017) and in enabling such

intrusions as ‘up-skirting’ in physical space (McGlynn, Rackley, & Houghton, 2017) or unsolicited ‘dick pics’ in digital/online space (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018). As our awareness of such practices develops, there is therefore a clear necessity to ‘join up some of the dots’ between practices, places and people (Westmarland, 2015: xi). Vera-Gray (2017: 73) herself notes that future research ‘should include online contexts in order to explore the overlaps and differences, as well as how women’s experiences offline impact our experiences online’.

It is here then, in ‘joining up some of the dots’, that this research begins. It explores experiences and definitions of intrusions occurring in online, digital and offline space, also problematising distinctions between private and public and unknown and known men common to exiting literature. It thus focuses on what a group of women encounter and report as men’s intrusions into their bodily-selves rather than on behaviours related to specific men. Indeed, ‘agents’ of men’s intrusions are not necessarily always identifiable, particularly where digital materials are created and distributed by unspecified individuals, institutions and algorithms. The research therefore starts with the concept ‘men’s intrusions’ in order to enable participants to share the spaces, agents, materials and mediums which matter to them.

### Scrapbooking: sensemaking through making with the senses

This focus necessitates a methodology inclusive of diverse mediums and materials and of changing interpretations of experiences. Scrapbooking is posited here as a methodology for capturing just such diversity and process at work, without the need for a fixed or final position ‘on’ experience. Indeed, Tamas (2014: 88) conceptualisation of scrapbooking makes its possible methodological opportunities very clear: ‘the episodic, collage format of a scrapbook undermines narrative continuity and integrity and positions representation as a constructed, contingent work-in-progress’ (see also Christensen, 2017, 2011 for a history of the genre and practice in the USA).

The appropriation and transformation of adversity into coherent autobiographical accounts is too often posited as a therapeutic and transformative ideal, reflecting a normative assumption of ‘authenticity’ behind lives lived and recounted as singular linear narratives (Strawson, 2004). An over-reliance on qualitative interviewing in the in-depth study of men’s violence against women is in danger of taking literally and uncritically the now well-problematised notion of ‘giving voice’ (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009) or ‘speaking out’ (Serisier, 2018). In short, we often risk using the ‘master’s tools’ (Lorde, 2018) in our prescription of particular testimonial modes. Scrapbooking thus attempts to explore scraps of experience without demanding their rational auto-coherence or assuming a direct link between expression and the ‘truth’ of both self and experience. Of course, women might strive for biographic coherence, linking episodes together through a sense of chronology and self. If so, the aim of scrapbooking is to observe this process *at work*, not simply to facilitate it.

Moreover, the reflecting on and revisioning of experiences is particularly crucial to explore; women in the UK are culturally encouraged to ‘revision’ intrusions as episodes where ‘nothing really happened’ (Kelly & Radford, 1990). Taking Stanko’s (1985: 2) example of how women might characterise intrusions as ‘perfectly innocent’ when there has ‘been no trouble’ or as ‘something natural’ in a specific context (Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie, & Huntley, 2006, p. 101), methods relying on participants simply recalling (rather than first recording) intrusions might exclude more ambiguous or mundane encounters and veil subjective and shifting criteria for ‘no trouble’ or ‘natural’.

Given that women’s experiences and interpretations of intrusion are situated in unique material contexts – reflecting broader intersections between, for example, race, class and place – a methodological design for capturing their situated-interconnectedness is crucial. Indeed, scrapbooks with their implied – and, in the case of this research, explicit – attention to multiple materials and episodes are inclusive of the diverse ways in which people think and communicate and also permit

expressive styles linked to particular spaces (e.g. emoticons or memes associated with social media).

### Taking up the challenge: scrapbooking men's intrusions

The participants each received a scrapbook in which they were asked to present any experiences, observations and reflections relating to men's intrusions over the course of one week. The scrapbooks were designed to be mobile and participants were randomly assigned either digital or analogue scrapbooks. They were encouraged to contribute as little or as much as they wanted and however they chose. I met with each participant individually twice, one week apart. The first meeting involved a brief introduction to and tutorial on using the scrapbooks and aimed to establish what participants understood by the terms 'scrapbooking' and 'intrusions'. The second meeting was a detailed 'sharing phase' for their creations (Katriel & Farrell, 1991) and an opportunity for me to probe further into what experiences and reflections they had had over the week and for them to edit and develop their books.

An 8 × 8 inch spiral-bound square scrapbook was sourced, comprising blank brown paper pages which could be tied together using black ribbon. Digital scrapbooks took the form of an individual password-protected *Tumblr* blog, which only the researcher and each individual participant could view and edit. Social media platforms have been conceptualised as digital scrapbooks (e.g. Good, 2013). They are also free to sign up to and are generally designed to permit more expressive modes than sites specifically for digital scrapbooking, with *Tumblr* offering more opportunities than, for example, *Pinterest*, *Instagram* or *Twitter*. *Tumblr* also features an archiving function which positions individual blog posts horizontally. This feature better facilitates an overall and lateral view of the scrapbook and captures 'the episodic, collage ... work-in-progress' format which Tamas (2014: 88) champions.

Ethical approval was granted by the host university, and the research prioritised informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, in order to prevent harm and also encourage positive research experiences. Participants could access support and activist resources if they wished and each later received a report on the research's findings and implications. Participants were given a final opportunity to review, edit or retract what they had shared before data analysis began.

Mindful of a particular history of phenomenological feminist inquiry into men's intrusions (Vera-Gray, 2016a), data analysis here was an iterative and inductive process of thematic analysis centring both experiential specificity and commonality. This process was applied to the first meetings, the sharing phases, the content, construction and context of individual scraps in the books and to scrapbooks as a whole, also 'plugging in' contextual and theoretical factors as a (complicating) method of data analysis (see Mazzei & Jackson, 2012).

So who are the scrapbookers? Participants were recruited through several pragmatic strategies which posed familiar constraints. University student emailing lists, for example, access a large but fairly specific population close at hand. Likewise, for researchers to assume all email recipients have an 'equal opportunity to respond' compromises research's responsibility to explicitly and proactively address, for example, the exclusion of women of colour from research. Indeed, all participants here were white. Seven of these were British and one Bulgarian. Of the eight, half came from backgrounds self-identified as working-class and the others were middle-class. All participants were cisgender and their ages ranged from 22 to 41. Participants reported dyspraxia, dyslexia and mental health conditions, though the majority reported no disability or health condition. All women were part of socially-recognised intimate dyad relationships, of which only one was explicitly referred to as polyamorous. Six of these relationships involved men and two involved women. Two participants identified as queer and one as gay. The rest were heterosexual.

### Findings: how participants experience and define intrusions

The first section of these findings outlines the nature of intrusions which participants both document during the research period and recall more generally, while the second section examines how they frame these experiences. All participants loosely adopted the format either of presenting incidents of intrusion along with an explicit interpretation and/or of interpreting intrusions more generally and giving examples. It is as if the research was felt by participants to necessitate a distinction between 'objective' evidence (the 'where', 'who' and 'how' of intrusion) and subjective interpretation (the more complex question of 'why'). Materials and expressive modes were often aligned to this distinction: participants' text and talk attempted to organise the metro tickets, magazine cut-outs and screenshots into theories about what counts as intrusions and why men intrude. This distinction shows their tendency to hierarchise knowledge, as what can be 'proved' (made material) was often privileged over what was experienced (embodied materiality).

#### Giving evidence: the nature of intrusions

##### Where: the "Closed Locked Room" versus "Everywhere"

The range of spaces in which the eight women note intrusions is extensive. Participants encounter men's intrusions in spaces as diverse as, for example, mountain tops, music gigs, online health forums, *Facebook* groups, libraries, cafes, *Twitter* news feeds, outside and inside their homes, in their cars, in photographed space, videoed space, *YouTube* comments space, on trains, waiting for buses, walking down streets, at work and in pubs, shops, gyms and swimming pools. Although these experiences vary considerably according to specific contexts and interpretations, all participants identified public and transitory spaces and work environments as sites for intrusions and the majority also experienced intrusions via digital or online technology.

In fact, participants organised their experiences in their scrapbooks to some extent by *type of space*, often making distinctions between physical locations like the street or transitory spaces like cycle and metro routes. Participants' understanding of spaces as distinct and contained is also evident where some depict a real or imagined "happy space"<sup>1</sup> in which they are free from men's intrusions. That intrusions are seen as greatly dependent on the boundaries of physical space is captured well in one participant's statement that "there is no environment in which I am not intruded upon by men unless I am in a closed locked room with trusted female friends".

Nonetheless, much of what participants experience illustrates Buroway's (2003: 674) claim that 'the spatially bounded site, unconnected to other sites, is a fiction of the past', as is perhaps the "closed locked room". Indeed, it is possible to conceptualise intrusions as trans-locational and participants themselves as 'sites' or 'spaces' because most note that men's intrusions follow them "everywhere" they go. For example, conversation spaces with "trusted female friends" are interrupted by stories of men's violence; auditory or head phone space is interrupted by lyrics romanticising violence against women; women's private photographed space is 'photobombed'<sup>2</sup> by unknown men. Even the homes shared by two pairs of women are intruded upon by television content or abusive comments received online, while one participant's scrapbook presents the intrusive phone messages received from a male housemate, despite the *literal* locked door between them (see Fig. 1). Such trans-locational experiences seem to be enabled by participants' increasingly techno-social lives.

<sup>1</sup> Quotation marks denote participants' spoken and written content.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford English Dictionary defines photobomb as to 'spoil (a photograph) by unexpectedly appearing in the camera's field of view as the picture is taken' (2017).



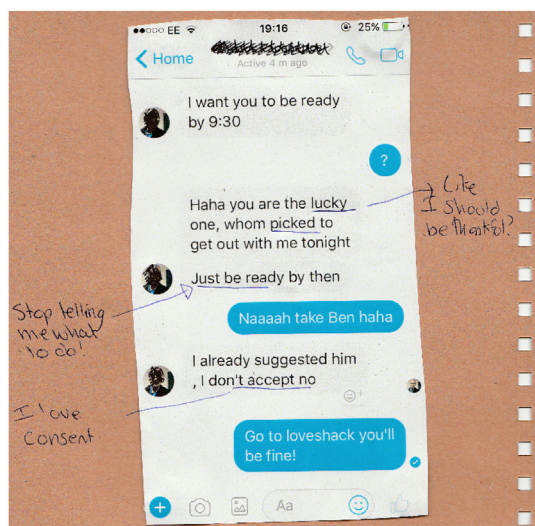


Fig. 1. Analogue scrapbook page showing an annotated and anonymised screenshot of messages.

#### Who: unknown men, known men and hieroglyphs

All participants reported intrusions perpetrated by unknown men. Whilst participants on the whole detailed fewer intrusions from known men, they also represented incidents involving partners, ex-partners, friends, housemates, course mates, bosses, pupils, colleagues, friends of friends, parents and parents' friends. Although one was explicit in her concern that the research might reveal to her “just how much” her partner intrudes on her, those in intimate relationships with men were less forthcoming about intrusions specific to their relationship or partner. Instead, partners were more often introduced as evidence of “good” or “wonderful” men or to suggest that similar behaviours take on different meanings depending on who is involved (see Fig. 2, for example).

Interestingly, even unknown men were often ascribed to different categories including, for instance, “men in bars”, “builders” or “working class lads”. This categorisation may demonstrate a reluctance to attribute intrusive behaviour to men more generally and the need – especially perhaps for those involved in or seeking intimate relationships with men – to draw the line between ‘some men’ and ‘others’. Similarly, Fileborn (2012: 251) found that both the relationship between women and their perpetrator and also the norms for interaction in specific spaces like bars greatly impact women's ability to ‘identify

and respond to unwanted sexual attention’.

Nonetheless, all participants feared a general threatening male presence beyond specific sites or situations, a fear which several participants described as in itself intrusive. This was particularly apparent where participants discussed their concerns for other women or being alone at night or mentioned how “lucky” they were with the men in their life. For one participant in particular, ‘luck’ – rather than specific men – seemed to be the agent of intrusions.

Participants adopting a more explicit feminist framing of intrusions were more inclined to identify the threat and privilege of all men or men as a social category. Indeed, these participants approached both men and men's intrusions much as Burton (2015) describes feminists in academia using ‘white theory boy [as a] hieroglyph for structural inequality’, and experienced great catharsis in its application. For some participants, a transformative abstraction from the specific happened during the scrapbooking process. Recording different experiences across different mediums and laying them out laterally enabled participants to make links between experiences – a moment of feminist ‘snapping’ (Ahmed, 2017) or an example perhaps of the ‘kairos’ or ‘click’ moment crucial for consciousness-raising (Firth & Robinson, 2016).

The findings show the importance of centring all men – rather than men specific to certain relationships, situations or space – in women's accounts of intrusions. Indeed, distinctions between known, valued and unknown men were clearly operationalised by participants to make sense of intrusions. Likewise, their quick and cathartic movement between discussing specific men and men as a category necessitates a flexible research conceptualisation of gender.

#### How: making women “Damn Well Aware”

The term ‘intrusion’ was open to participants' interpretation and their responses link and blur theoretical distinctions made elsewhere between, for example, structural, symbolic and inter-personal violence (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002, for example). When asked what they inferred from the term, participants alluded to an “invasion of space” or an “interruption [of] flow”. The research findings show just how many multi-faceted forms that ‘invasion’ or ‘interruption’ can take.

Firstly, all participants recalled or encountered an experience of being looked at in a way best captured by one as “I'm going to assault you with my eyes and make you damn well aware of what I'm doing”. Most recalled specific incidents, often involving men staring at parts of their bodies for extended periods of time. Several indicated a more general feeling of being watched by an unspecified male presence, depicted in one participant's scrapbook as many disembodied eyes. This experience of being watched seems to extend to social media, where one participant recalls being “creeped out” when a stranger in an unfamiliar city approached her in a bar to say he had seen photos of her on Facebook. It made her wonder how many other men had seen images of her and linked the actions of one man to a more general online male presence. Her engagement with Facebook had changed since this experience.

Secondly, all participants documented intrusive comments from men, often not of an explicitly sexual nature. For example, participants were told to ‘smile’ or ‘cheer up’, which was often inferred to mean “be a nice girl”. The ‘nice girl’ which one participant drew in her scrapbook suggests the ideals of ‘niceness’ are whiteness, femininity and innocence which some participants were quick to critique. Whether men were commenting on how sweaty one woman was after a run or how another looked “exactly like that weather girl” from the news, all participants except one were accustomed to having parts of their days interrupted by unknown men's comments. These comments were often seen as meaningless and one participant asks “why have you literally just interrupted my work to tell me this stupid bit of thing that I don't even care about”. Non-sexual interruptions without obvious attempts to establish conversation or intimacy were experienced as particularly bizarre. Again, men's comments also occurred in online space: one

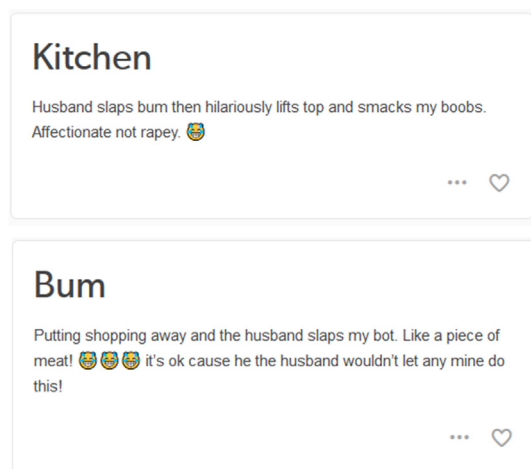


Fig. 2. Two digital ‘scraps’ featuring text, laughing face emoticons and interactive controls.

participant shared a Facebook message from someone not seen for over ten years stating “you are still the best blow job to date” and another reported numerous derogatory comments from men on another woman's YouTube channel.

Thirdly, participants often also shared incidents of a non-verbal nature, involving groping, being spat on, being expected to shake hands or hug unknown men and men cutting in front of them in cars. One referred to a controlling ex-partner who, for example, refused to let her sleep without maintaining physical contact and two others referred to non-recent rape and non-recent domestic violence respectively. All participants also referred to women they knew who had been sexually assaulted.

As a result of the research's interpretative participant-led approach, participants also reported a spectrum of complex and often indirect intrusions which are more difficult to categorise. Some can, however, be seen as symbolic subordinatory intrusions, in which the women were made aware of themselves simultaneously as women and as subordinated. One participant's depiction of a news headline about men's violence exemplifies these micro everyday reminders of inequality which literally ‘intrude’, in that they suddenly appear uninvited in news feeds or conversations. These examples extend the continuum to both representational and material practice, where being uninvited, unexpected and forcing gendered-self-awareness are common characteristics of intrusions across both.

Finally, other participant experiences were still more complex and non-linear, often blurring distinctions between indirect and direct and the ‘where’, ‘who’ and ‘how’ of intrusion. Such complexity is well-illustrated by the following example. One participant reports how in an online forum an unknown man quotes actor Johnny Depp in support of kindness towards animals. When she replies “that doesn't mean much coming from a man who beat up his wife”, the man responds abusively. For this participant, the encounter is a many-faceted intrusion, involving a number of elements: the man's unsought comment, his casual use of an alleged abuser's words, the reminder (and casual dismissal) of the intrusion perpetrated against actor Amber Heard (previously married to Depp), a reliving of the participant's own experiences of domestic violence and finally the man's abusive online comments in response to her.

This participant was not alone in experiencing many-faceted intrusions. Elsewhere, a participant reports how overheard rape jokes between male colleagues trigger intrusive thoughts and memories, whilst her vocal resistance prompts abuse from the colleagues, and another participant depicts watching a reality television show in which a woman's harassment is made entertainment. Likewise, a current *Daily Mail* article about a woman's drugging and kidnapping causes one participant great upset and anger, because of her partner's suggestion she read it without warning her of its content, the lack of space given to her by him to be angry about the violence described and her fear that friends of hers who have been spiked and assaulted might find this article and have their day “ruined”. Indeed, the significance of other women's experiences in shaping and influencing participants' experiences was marked throughout the data.

In all these examples, participants reported feeling upset or angry long after the incidents themselves had ‘ended’ and frustrated by their uninvited nature. Intrusions prove to be sudden, unexpected and yet, paradoxically, continuous. The finding that participants experience intrusions as ‘continuous’ is particularly noteworthy, given that participants in Vera-Gray's (2016a) study reported experiencing intrusions less frequently than they had anticipated. This distinction perhaps highlights the importance of including digital and online intrusions for a full and ‘joined up’ understanding of intrusive behaviours.

These findings, though highly individual, thus capture a common character, showing participants' permanent awareness of and exposure to men's violence in and across spaces, when, in the words of one participant, “all we wanted was some beans on toast and like a half hour of crap TV”.

### *Frames: situating and explaining men's intrusions*

The following ‘frames’ encompass participants' explicit and implicit explanations for men's intrusions. Whilst these frames varied and overlapped throughout the course of scrapbooking and our meetings together, the following three capture particular positions adopted in participants' sense-making processes. These were not fixed or final and participants engaged themselves and the researcher in a dialogue *between* these different positions as they shared incidents, interpretations and also reflections on their interpretations. In fact, scrapbooks were often used as “work spaces” for participants to explore different thoughts, feelings and frames.

#### *“One man you can brush off as a weirdo”: the individual frame*

This frame comprises explanations locating the aetiology of intrusions in individual men. Although this frame appears to attribute responsibility to the men concerned, participants' scrapbooks and comments often suggested something unusual and atypical about them. Indeed, adjectives denoting abnormality, such as ‘odd’, ‘bizarre’ and ‘weird’, were commonplace for at least five participants, particularly when describing unknown and non-sexually intrusive men. Often, the lack of an obvious sexual or “ulterior motive” rendered the men “odd” rather than “creepy” and participants struggled to explain *why* these experiences had happened.

That men's intrusive practices are often pathologised or presented as abnormal is of course well-documented (Brown & Ballou, 1992) and expressions such as “socially awkward” and “unstable” or “probably had some problems” were certainly evident in the data. Such explanations were also sometimes sympathetic: in reflecting on why a man shouted at her in a library for coffee, one participant explains “he's got mobility issues, he's elderly” and several participants suggested loneliness as a motivating factor for other intrusions. The fact that these women specifically were sites or spaces for the men's ‘issues’ to be externalised was not taken into consideration here.

Where similarities between “that really weird guy” and the next were difficult for participants to ignore or sympathise with, some made allusions to other factors, using terms like “uneducated” and “working class” areas or “different cultures”. It seems they drew on processes of othering and on particular and problematic stereotypes, as in one participant's collage of a racialised “archetypal predatory male”. Here, individual men could perhaps be tenuously conceived of as ‘some men’, provided ‘men’ acted as a descriptive rather than explanatory noun.

Moreover, several participants actively resisted making generalisations about men, with one being wary of “man-bashing” and another wondering if women are more at risk from other women and should perhaps be “wary of people regardless of gender”. In a similar vein, one participant introduced her scrapbook with “it's just kind of luck ... or coincidence” that things happened this week to put in the scrapbook. Paradoxically, explanations presenting intrusive men as atypical often relied on making positive generalisations about men or suggesting all women “take things more personally”.

#### *“Maybe he” or “Maybe I”: the grey frame*

The grey frame is constituted by explanations of a more speculative nature, with uncertain, ambiguous or ambivalent allocations of responsibility. Certainly, almost all contributions from participants included prefaces like ‘maybe he’ or ‘maybe I’ to accompany the mediation of cause and blame. Motifs of miscommunication and misinterpretation dominated some accounts (see also Coy, Kelly, Vera-Gray, Garner, & Kanyeredzi, 2015) and were used to suggest that some incidents were perhaps not intrusions after all.

With regard to rape, one participant wondered if “it is just the man or if something else went wrong” and elsewhere another suggested it must be “very confusing for men” as there is “no hard and fast rule” for drawing the line. It seems the scrapbooks provided some participants with the space to consider what that “something else” that goes

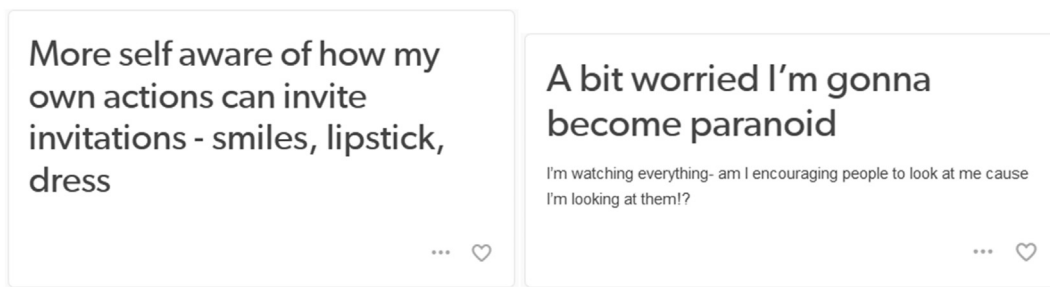


Fig. 3. Two digital 'scraps' featuring text and interactive controls.

"wrong" might be and in Fig. 3 one participant wonders if her actions and her "paranoia" play a role in men's intrusions.

However, some actively resisted ideas of paranoia or "over-sensitivity" and wrote about the lack of space in which to be "allowed to be angry". Likewise, participants did not speculate on or question the accounts of other individual women with one uploading an American woman of colour's videoed account of abuse directly to her scrapbook because it "feels like a bit of a betrayal if I try and paraphrase it". However, this inclusion cannot be understood as simply creating solidarity across space or providing a platform for unheard stories. I explored who created and shared the video and why, discovering its unexpected (and unsolicited) emergence in the participant's newsfeed and her subsequent feelings of both sympathy and frustration towards the woman concerned. Moreover, her motive for including the video in her scrapbook was ambiguous and she seemed to suggest the assaults detailed were only an issue for black women in the USA. Given her previous conviction that she had not experienced any intrusions herself, this inclusion perhaps showed her drawing on perceived racial and geographic distinctions to avoid confronting the extent and immediacy of men's intrusions in her own life.

Equally – and despite some familiarity with concepts of 'victim-blaming' – most participants attributed some responsibility to themselves for intrusions, both explicitly, in, for example, "I should have been more aware" and, more implicitly, in one participant's suggestion that she doesn't get "cat-called" because she is not "attractive in an obvious way". That men's attraction to women causes intrusion was certainly implied by several participants, with two also suggesting that the attractiveness of men influences how it is experienced and defined:

"It's really quite shallow because you're ok with people looking at you when they're young attractive men ... when it becomes the problem is when it gets to a certain age and all of a sudden the same look might be categorised as creepy".

This comment highlights the crucial role context plays for participants' interpretations and reflects Fairchild's (2010) finding that the attractiveness and age of an unknown intruder influence women's experiences of fear and enjoyment. Queer and gay-identifying participants were far more explicit in rejecting attraction as aetiology and even men's sexualised comments about "wanting to get involved" with two women were understood as examples of entitlement and homophobia rather than attraction. Nonetheless, participant ambiguity was marked throughout the data, particularly where intrusions involved known and valued men both directly and indirectly. One suggests it is harder to be objective about close men and several implied that different relationship contexts and dynamics inform different expectations and interpretations (see Fig. 2).

A grey framing of men's intrusions can therefore also be identified as participants questioning their own boundaries or "limits of creepiness" in different contexts. Though sometimes uncertain about personal experiences, participants were unlikely to be ambivalent more generally about intrusions like rape, "which is generally understood to be horrific". Indeed, one sought to distance her experience from that identification – "I don't want you to think I've been raped or anything but...",

as if it might limit the nuance with which she could discuss her experience and ambivalence. Of course, access to these 'grey' explanations was greatly facilitated by the research approach as participants interpreted and applied the term 'men's intrusions' in different and changing ways.

#### *'Making the link': the feminist frame/s*

Despite one participant's frustration at "people not making the link", all participants did in fact make some link between particular incidents and gender inequality. Nonetheless, they differed in how quickly and consistently they did this, in the extent to which links were seen to explain intrusions and in their explicit commitment to feminist framings of intrusions.

Three consistently adopted a feminist framing of men's intrusions, often situating men's behaviours within and alongside concepts like 'gendered roles', 'socialisation', 'entitlement' and 'misogyny'. These participants drew on a language which enabled them to, in the words of one participant, "conceptualise very quickly" from individual incidents. The importance of language in explaining men's intrusions was apparent where some participants compared the term 'intrusion' with related terms, such as, 'man-spreading' or 'micro-aggression' and valued the concept 'intrusions' as "a way of thinking I had not previously thought about".

Indeed, one participant's general statement that it is "easier to comprehend something when you have the language" was evidenced by her pleasure and amusement in discovering and including a new concept in her scrapbook ('Mantrum'<sup>3</sup>) and points to the complex relationship between discourses and subjectivities (Gunnarsson, 2018). Some participants, as in Fig. 4,<sup>4</sup> certainly derived amusement from undermining the language used by other, less critical frames for men's public behaviour.

In fact, explanations of this type often involved challenging the available frames which participants felt expected to use by particular people and by society more broadly. For instance, one participant argues that assuming intrusion stems from a man's desire rather than a woman's lack of consent is a "male-centric" framing of the issue. This participant still engaged in reflecting on particular incidents but, like some of the others, was more likely to speak theoretically and make a conscious, intentional 'commitment' to a feminist frame.

For others, whose spoken words were largely constituted by grey frames, commitment to a feminist framing was more apparent in their scrapbooks. Thus, despite one participant's spoken assertion that in her

<sup>3</sup> Defined in her scrapbook as 'the childish rage displayed by a man when he doesn't get his way'.

<sup>4</sup> Collage across two scrapbook pages featuring a black and white image of a man spitting onto cracked flooring. Text on the right features the heading 'spitting' followed by written links to articles about spitting in public and the participant's own musings about girls who spit, the fine of £150 for spitting in public and the notion that spitting spreads disease. The text on the left, which is most pertinent to the article, reads 'when men spit they are not in fact trying to save the world from drought' and reflects on men marking their territory and how spitting makes the participant feel sick.



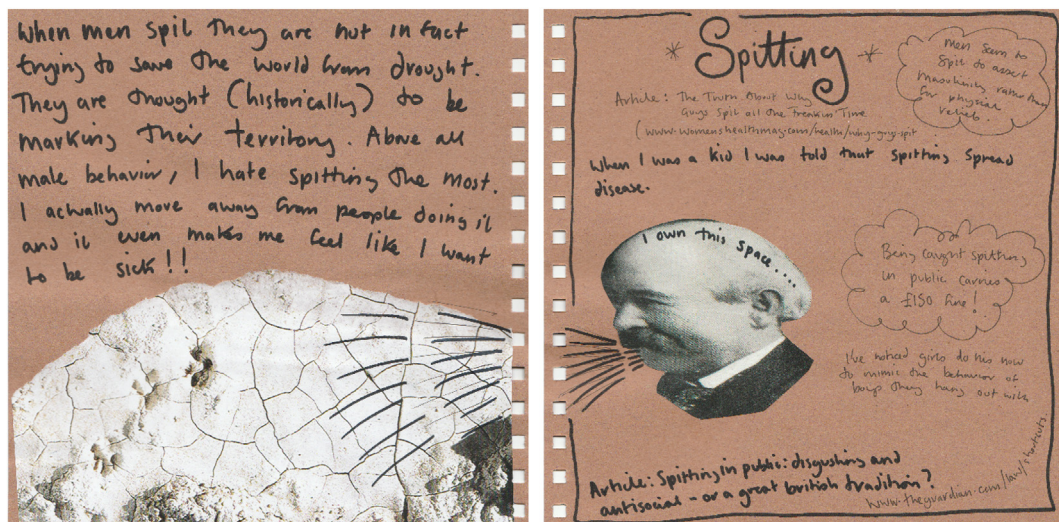


Fig. 4. Analogue scrapbook pages featuring text and collage (see footnotes for image description).

experience men are “more straight-forward creatures and don't play games or have hidden agendas”, her scrapbook appeared to be highly critical of men's behaviour and its sexist motivation.

Not all potentially feminist explanations adopted the particular – and sometimes inaccessible (hooks, 2003; Messer-Davidow, 2002) – languages associated with feminist academic and activist discourse. Instead, participants used varied forms of creative expression with many possible interpretations. Defining and inferring feminist ‘commitment’ or ‘intent’ from these was therefore a challenge. For instance, one participant's visual conceptualisation of two men witnessed fighting at a bus stop as rutting stags may suggest essentialised animal behaviour or alternatively (and simultaneously) be a metaphor for masculinity as performed. Her self-identification as a feminist and adoption of feminist explanations for other incidents does not necessarily provide clarity here. Moreover, it is important here not to assume a kind of ‘rational scrapbooking’, through and by which all scrapbook contents reflect authentic and direct expressions of an inner truth about the situation.

Furthermore, participant's explanations were often indirect or implied, with one writing that men take advantage of the “very particular” gig setting to grope women and another creating a drawing of the tools constituting a builders’ “starter pack for being able to stare at women and to have no negative consequences”. In their suggestion that certain behaviours are typical only of particular men in particular settings, both examples may evidence an ‘individual frame’. Alternatively, they also suggest an awareness of an intentional and tactical manipulation of settings and ‘tools’ by men more generally – a manipulation which current research certainly evidences (see, for example, Barnes & White, 2019).

Finally, the scrapbooks suggested *different* feminist framings of men's intrusions, with two describing their feminist positions as ‘intersectional’ and suggesting their visible sexualities disrupt social settings differently. Whether some of their explanations for men's intrusions constituted a specifically intersectional feminist frame or drew on different related political frames is clearly illustrated where one states “I don't know if it is the queer thing ... or the poly thing” which influenced both the intrusion and her interpretation. Certainly, whether you can “separat[e] the ‘inseparable’” is a question for intersectional feminist theory more generally (Gunnarsson, 2015).

## Discussion

### *Intrusions: commonalities, complexities and challenges*

With their concepts of space invasion or flow interruption, participants largely interpreted men's intrusions as ‘uninvited [acts] with disruptive effect’ (Vera-Gray, 2016a: 15). The uninvited experiences they report substantiate existing literature on the *range* of men's intrusive practices and their consequences (for example, Westmarland, 2015).

Scrapbooking greatly facilitated identification of intrusions' common character by both the researcher and participants. For example, just as one participant recognised staring was intended to “make you damn well aware of what I'm doing”, comments on another's similarity to a TV weather presenter demonstrate that intrusions involve a forced awareness of being-for-others: ‘I must be made to see myself as they see me’ (Bartky, 1990: 27 in Vera-Gray, 2016b). Indeed, participants' encounters with comments like “smile” or “cheer up” evidences Vera-Gray and Fileborn's (2018) suggestion that these exact words constitute a recognition-based harm and experience of being over-determined by another. One participant's conceptualisation of two intrusions as linked examples of ‘objectification’ confirms that intrusions – whether sexual or not – articulate women's bodily experiences as being for men, a ‘truth’ which women must be reminded of.

Where the research findings are particularly novel, however, is in capturing the wide spectrum of spaces in which this reminder occurs, including intrusions in digital and online spaces, such as Facebook messages, YouTube comments and Twitter newsfeeds. Still more novel perhaps, the findings reveal how online, digital and offline intrusions experientially *interrelate* and *collapse* into each other. For instance, messages from a housemate are felt to be particularly threatening, given his close *physical* proximity, while an unknown man identifying one participant by her Facebook photos leads to more general concerns about men watching her online. Contrary to claims of the utopia offered by cyberspace, the research outcomes certainly support Robins' (1996: 137) reminder that, after all, humans, ‘not gods’, use technology and substantiate reports of the abusive employment of technology by men (Henry & Powell, 2016).

Furthermore, findings here strengthen challenges to the temporally and spatially-bounded site as an ontological basis for research (Urry, 2000). Indeed, participants' experiences as trans-locational but, paradoxically, subject to space encourage the unique research supposition that they themselves are mobile ‘sites’ or ‘spaces’ for intrusion. Like so many in the Global North, participants' lives are deeply intertwined



with devices and with digital, online and virtual spaces, to the extent that the latter cannot be said to constitute a physical space in any traditional sense. This also problematises any easy distinction between public and private space and the division of intrusions specific to each. Therefore, whilst participants recognised the situational specificity of some intrusions – for example, frequent and normalised groping in drinking and gig venues – intrusions seem to follow the women everywhere they go. These findings indicate that research on the *lived breadth* of men's violence benefits from taking as its starting point *persons* not practices or places.

With this in mind, closer attention to individual and situational specificity and diversity is required. Participants' own "visible" sexualities, ages, "goth" fashion and, to quote one, "ambiguous" gender presentation necessitate closer examination of the different factors facilitating a range of different 'breaks' or 'disruptions'. For example, the experience of being treated as a threat to other women is in need of close attention. Certainly, the question of whether such factors possess a 'thin' commonality (Jónasdóttir, 1994) may provide a useful point of departure for defences of or challenges to the category 'women' itself (Gunnarsson, 2011; hooks, 1981) and for continuum-thinking in the context of multiple forms and contexts of oppression. A more diverse – particularly ethnically diverse – sample would be needed to explore this further. Then again, just as the framework of men's intrusions *appears* to account for women's experiences, it may also obscure those of particularly marginalized groups. Indeed, the language of men's intrusions potentially elides a whole range of intrusive behaviours enacted by women themselves, often intended to Other particular women and gender-diverse folk. Two participants reported such behaviour.

In accompanying participants everywhere, scrapbooks opened the research up to highly complex multi-faceted intrusions. However, these findings were not solely the result of the methodological design: the research acted as the first empirical experiment into the *interpretation* of 'intrusions', a term hitherto employed to approach and conceptualise from data on men's diverse practices. Although I began with a definition relying largely on literal and identifiable agents who act, participants gave considerable primacy to the uninvited and unexpected nature of intrusions, which led to more indirect and complex accounts. They often reported experiences – here termed symbolic subordinatory intrusions – without an easily identifiable agent, other than perhaps a 'hieroglyph' accounting for cases 'where there is no such actor ... the violence is built into the [social] structure' (Galtung, 1969: 171).

For example, one participant's encounter with a news article about men's violence might evidence (and be of interest to academics concerned with) structural violence or 'media effects'. However, the impact of its *sudden and unsolicited* appearance in women's lives is an unexplored and very important area of study. Importantly, this research finds that constant exposure to such sudden appearances results in a permanent awareness of men's violence and dominance which participants are forced to negotiate and incorporate into their sense of 'being in the world' (Vera-Gray, 2016b).

Other women's experiences proved crucial to participants' being in the world and their experiences and understandings of intrusion, reflecting something of MacKinnon's (1987: 105) observation that an abused woman will compare her experiences 'against every rape case she has ever heard about'. Research which focuses solely on what women report about themselves – often in resistance to the notion of 'speaking' for others – misses the complexity of living one's own experiences through and with those of others and the possibility therein for nurturing solidarity. Likewise, practices of othering in participants' sense-making warrant deeper consideration, in particular their assumptions about the kind of men who intrude and the kind of women who experience intrusions.

The term 'intrusions' was also intended to be inclusive of experiences which participants may be unable to 'frame' as abusive, as in the statement: "I don't want you to think I've been raped ... but ...". However, this research also shows a need to return to thinking about

how violence itself is defined (Morgan & Björkert, 2006), with the findings situating concepts such as 'the gaze' *beyond* specific men and spaces and blurring definitions of, for instance, interpersonal, symbolic and structural violence. For one participant, a derogatory and sexist image of a woman exercising was *experienced as connected* to how a specific man commented on her exercising. Both incidents took on a particular meaning and were experienced as harmful *in light of each other*.

Far from diluting concepts of the continuum, this exploration of the materiality of representation builds on vital critiques and developments of Kelly's concept (see, for example, Boyle, 2019; Phoenix, 2012). Certainly, Phoenix notes that Kelly's (2011: 227) continuum includes 'words describing women's bodies and sexuality' and 'images portraying women as inferior' where these act to reduce women's autonomy. Men's intrusions thus offers a useful conceptual apparatus for understanding how representational practices suddenly intrude into women's bodily-selves, creating an experience of unity between the announcement of women's subordination in the behaviours of specific men and in the materials made primarily by men for men.

Evidently, intrusions offered a useful framework or language for participants to make not only 'the invisible visible' (Stanko, 1998: 35) but also the *connected and interrelated* visible (and perhaps also the *re-presented* material). Then again, whilst intrusions were intended to open up research to varied experiences, the term itself has perhaps largely negative connotations. Therefore, reported incidents had already been identified to some extent as negative and unwelcome – 'odd', 'annoying' or 'creepy', for example – potentially excluding a wealth of more ambiguous encounters. Indeed, participants' 'grey frames' for explaining intrusion and some of their ambivalence towards attraction, desire and known men warrant closer attention to their *interactions with men* more generally and to 'sex as usual' (Kelly, 2011: 254).

After all, heterosexuality acts as a frame or 'cultural scaffolding' (Gavey, 2013), through which some intrusions might be posited as welcome and even necessary for the development of intimacy, whilst heteronormativity provides a grammar for bodies and experiences which shapes their interpretation in scrapbooking space. Of course, research attention to 'interactions with men' rather than 'experiences of men's intrusions' establishes 'men' as specific identifiable agents and may limit other findings in which structural and symbolic violence and the actual concept of 'men' is explored further. Indeed, this research found that distinctions between known, valued and unknown men and the concept of men itself are operationalised to enable catharsis, abstraction and processes of othering and minimisation.

#### *Scrapbooking intrusions: a specific kind of knowing*

The term 'scrapbooking' itself was also open to interpretation but, in practice, participants generally adopted a format distinguishing between 'objective' evidence and its interpretation. Through compiling this evidence and using the designed time for reflection and discussion, participants were able to make connections and comparisons between their experiences. For example, comparing incidents across digital and non-digital spaces helped one participant to see both verbal comments about her sweating after a run and a Facebook post about a woman in high heels at the gym as, "actually when I think about it", examples of objectifying and ridiculing women who exercise.

Scrapbooks documented not only *how* participants responded but also how they *would like* to respond acting as both catharsis and preparation for future intrusions. They facilitated participants' reflection on measures taken to *negotiate* and *minimise* intrusions, such as introducing a third party to inhibit escalation (Fig. 1) or wearing headphones in public spaces to block out sounds. With the scrapbook 'evidence' laid out and shared between us, I could combat concerns that they "didn't do anything" or "could have done more" by recognising their situated and limited 'space for action' (Kelly, 2012).

Scrapbooking also initiated dialogue between participants and their

families and friends and prompted others into sharing some of their encounters. It seems scrapbooking creates witnesses of those (and for those) who view the scrapbook content and engage in discussion about intrusions. This unplanned sharing helped participants to contextualise their experiences within local and broader environments and norms. In identifying specific measures for negotiating intrusions, in challenging their self-blame and in promoting this conversation and solidarity, scrapbooks themselves perhaps acted as 'tool kits', something which has important pedagogic and political possibilities for future feminist research and practice.

Nevertheless, enabling women to privilege 'objective' evidence – for example, valuing the rawness of a 'found' screenshot of intrusive Facebook messages over a 'created' cartoon of the exchange – is in danger of reifying certain hierarchies of evidence and needs to be challenged. Indeed, the research findings here show scrapbooking to be a positive exploration of expression itself, offering a window on and for participants to mix the different 'languages' of materials and modes. Different materials contradicted, corroborated and contextualised each other, in ways which enable a break from 'accuracy' and a movement into sensory, experiential and conceptual flexibility.

Likewise, participants treated gender with both conceptual flexibility and a certain constraint. On the one hand, they took gender itself for granted, with participants using and reifying normative presentational markers or cues to 'read' the gender of unknown others and subsequently depict and discuss them. On the other, participants also created 'strategic' shorthand (Spivak, 1996, 1990) or 'hieroglyphs', where 'men', 'men's intrusions' and 'women' denoted something both insidious and structural, to and from which the aforementioned markers and individuals were connected and separated.

Certainly, participants' attempts at giving gendered coherence to people and intrusions raise questions about the responsibility of scrapbooking as a process enabling sense-making itself: to facilitate coherence and the adoption of particular frames or to encourage a break from these? Evidently, the coherence feminists give to both scrapbook data and participants' sense-makings will depend on personal, political and academic standpoints. Nevertheless, scrapbooking, men's intrusions and, as presented here, scrapbooking men's intrusions offer many exciting opportunities to both develop and complicate understandings of the lived continuum of men's violence against women and also to diversify feminist research approaches to gender, space and violence.

## Conclusion

This article has sought to explore eight women's experiences and interpretations of 'men's intrusions', arguing for this framework as a means of exploring a lived continuum of men's practices in and across digital, online and offline space. A wide range of complex, multi-faceted intrusions were experienced by participants as being simultaneously unexpected and continuous, and imposing gendered-self-awareness with lasting negative effect. Participants adopted different frames for men's intrusions, three of which were identified: an individual frame, a grey frame and feminist frame/s.

Novel findings here include not only the wide spectrum of spaces in which men's intrusions occur but also the experiential interrelation and collapse of such spaces and intrusions into each other and the resulting necessity for centring persons (rather than practices or places) in research on the lived continuum. Furthermore, participants gave considerable primacy to other women's experiences and also to the unexpected nature of intrusions, leading to more indirect and complex accounts without an easily identifiable agent.

Analogue and digital scrapbooking methodologically has been shown to aid participants in both identifying and representing intrusions and to facilitate their reflection on measures taken to negotiate and minimise these. In also helping some participants to connect intrusions to inequality, scrapbooking offers pedagogic and political

possibilities for future feminist research and practice. Future studies might also consider in more detail the effect of sudden and unsolicited media and representational practice in women's lives, intrusive behaviours enacted by women themselves, and the practices of othering used by women to make sense of intrusions.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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